

## Dakota land and Dakota life /

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### DAKOTA LAND AND DAKOTA LIFE. BY E. D. NEILL.

On the afternoon of May 15th, 1850, there might have been seen hurrying through the streets of Saint Paul, numbers of naked and painted braves of the Kaposia band of the Dakotas, ornamented with all the attire of war and panting for the scalps of their enemies. A few hours before, the youthful and warlike head chief of the Ojibways, (Chippewas) "Hole-in-the-day," having secreted his canoe in the retired gorge which leads to the Cave, in the suburbs of the town, adjoining the Military Reserve, with two or three associates had crossed the river, and almost in sight of our inhabitants, attacked a small party of Dakotas and succeeded in taking a scalp. A spectacle like this will, in all probability, be never again witnessed from the adjacent bluffs.

An interesting change, resulting from the ratification of the treaties with the Dakotas at the last session of the United States Senate, has occurred. Where but a short time since, it was no uncommon sight to see from our windows only the cone-shaped teepee, and the savage hunter with his family and dogs, we now also behold, by night, the candle in the rude log cabin sending its rays across the stream, and listen, by day, to the cheerful voice of the wood-cutter's ax, or the lullaby of the pale-faced mother, and see those engaged in household duties whose early life was passed in the schools of the East.

Now that the wave of advancing civilization has crossed 255 the majestic river in front of the Capital of Minnesota, a few more months will obliterate the rude aboriginal villages in our immediate vicinity, and the corpse perched upon a scaffold upon some eminence, will give way to the hay-stack or corn-crib of the agriculturist. Bitterly disappointed as the Dakotas are, in not obtaining the permanent reservation in the original treaty, the Great Seal of Minnesota, with its representation of a warrior flying on horseback towards the

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setting sun, and looking back with sorrow upon the white man who has felled the trees of his old hunting grounds; and its motto, “ *Quo sursum volo videre* ,” will ere long be something more than the device of the engraver; will be a sad reality. From the experience of the past, it will not be many years before certain of our own poets will thus sing of this ancient people:

“Alas, for them! their day is o'er, Their fires are out from shore to shore; No more for them the wild deer bounds— The plough is on their hunting grounds. The pale man's ax rings through their woods, The pale man's sails skim o'er their floods. Their pleasant springs are dry. Their children look, by power oppressed, Beyond the mountains of the West— Their children go— to die!”

The least that we can do for the mighty nation that are soon to make an exodus from their familiar streams, is to attempt to preserve for the future settler some slight record of

### **DAKOTA LAND AND DAKOTA LIFE.**

While the missionaries of the A. B. C. F. M. have, from time to time, imparted much valuable information, it has been of a fragmentary description, and in a shape not accessible to the general reader.

The Dakotas assert that they call themselves by this name because, as it signifies, they are “friendly” or confederated 256 bands. They were first brought to the notice of the civilized world by some French traders, who, as early as the year 1654, had started on a voyage, which they continued to the region of lakes beyond Superior. They are designated by the name of Scioux or Sioux in the Jesuit relations and other early documents. In the map prefixed to the Amsterdam edition of “ Hennepin ,” the Sioux are styled Nedouessaus. On La Hontan's pretended map of Long River, they are called *Nadouessis* . Charlevoix , who visited Green Bay in 1721, in his great work on New France, prepared by order of Louis XIV., and which is remarkable for its accuracy, says: “The name of Sioux, that we give to these Indians, is entirely of our own making, or rather it is but the last two syllables

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of the name of *Nadouessioux* , as many nations call them.” In the Ojibway dialect the plural of *Nadowaisi* is *Nadowaisiwug* . The two last syllables are *Siwug* . The French have no *w* in their alphabet, and for brevity, as Charlevoix , no doubt correctly, remarks, called them “Sioux.” In the “Proces Verbal” of the taking possession of Louisiana at the mouth of the Mississippi on the 9th of April, 1682, the Dakotas are called “ *Nadouessioux* .” Coxe , in his “Carolana,” speaking of Lake Superior, remarks that it “is called by most of the savages the lake of the Nadouessous, the greatest, and most valiant nation of the North.” In a map of North America, issued in 1710, the Sioux west of the Mississippi are called by the general Ojibway name of *Nadouesse* , and those living in the neighborhood of Mille Lac, *Issati* . Hennepin , in 1680, learned that the Indians whom he saw on the shores of Rum and Elk Rivers, and the lakes at their sources were called *Issati* . At this day, the Mississippi and Minnesota Dakotas are called by those on the Missouri, *Issati* , or *Isanyati* , which name seems to have been given them from the fact that they once lived at *Isantamde* , Knife Lake, one of the Mille Lacs.

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In a long past age, the Dakotas perhaps lived in the region north of Lake Superior, and had some acquaintance with the Esquimaux, and other Arctic tribes. When the French extended their trade into the country beyond Lake Superior, they established a small post, under the charge of Sieur St. Germain , on the path north of Lake Superior, to prevent the Assiniboines, a branch of the Sioux, from going to Fort Nelson to trade, which was an English post on Hudson's Bay; and they built another at *Kamanistigoyan* , or Pigeon River. From a remark in La Harpe's Louisiana, it is inferred that the Sioux of the east or *M'dewakantonwans* , carried their furs to the Hudson Bay Company's posts as late as 1700. Hennepin remarks: “In the vicinity of Issati Lake, there are numerous other lakes and streams, on the banks of which dwell the *Issati* , the *Nadouessans* , the *Tintonha* , or People of the Prairie, the *Ouadebathon* , Or River People, the *Chongasketon* , the Wolf or Dog People, for the word ” *chonga* “ signifies wolf or dog; and many other bands which we comprehend under the name of *Nadouessans* or *Nadouessions* .” [Nouveau

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Voyage, pp. 321 and 322, Amsterdam, Ed.] On the map accompanying his work, Mille Lac is called *Chongasketon* Lake, north of which is marked the residence of the *Ouadebatons* ; above these are the Hanctons, and in the vicinity of the Lac des Assenipoils are the *Chongaskabion* , or “Nations de Forts.”

The first and only attempt to classify and enumerate the Dakotas, of which we can learn, (by the early French explorers,) was made by Le Sueur , in 1700. He subdivided the Scioux of the east into seven bands, who seem to have dwelt around the Mille Lacs:

### **NAMES OF THE SCIOUX OF THE EAST, WITH THEIR SIGNIFICATION.**

Mantantons—that is to say, Village of the Great Lake which empties into a small one.

Mendeoucantons—village of Spirit Lake. 16

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Quiopetons—village of the Lake with one River.

Psioumanitons—village of Wild Rice Gatherers.

Ouadebatons—the River Village.

Quatemanetons—village of the tribe who dwell on the point of the Lake.

Songasquitons—the brave Village.

### **The Scioux of the West.**

Touchouasintons—The Village of the Pole.

Psinchatons—Village of the Red Wild Rice.

Oujalespoitons—Village divided into many small Bands.

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Psinoutanhhintons—The Great Wild Rice Village.

Tintangaoughiatons—The Grand Lodge Village.

Ouapetons—Village of the Leaf.

Oughetgeodatons—Dung Village.

Ouapetontetons—Village of those who Shoot in the Large Pine.

Hinhanetons—Village of the Red Stone Quarry.

At present this nation numbers at least 25,000 souls, and consists of seven principal divisions, each of which is made up of several allied bands.

### **SIOUX OF THE MISSOURI.—TEETWAWNS.**

1. The division of the Dakotas in the “Far West” are known by the name of Tetonwans (Tee-twawns.) They are the “plundering Arabs” of America, and have of late years been a terror to the emigrants to the Pacific coast. At present they swarm over the plains west of the Missouri. Their name signifies “Village of the Prairie.” Hennepin (Amsterdam edition, p. 318) says that he was told of falls above those of Saint Anthony, probably those of Sauk Rapids, in the vicinity of which were the Tintonha, that is to say, the People of the Prairie. He also states that in August, 1679, in the vicinity of the Falls of Niagara, he saw the Iroquois returning from a war party, with Tintonha captives, “a nation who dwelt in the prairies more than 400 leagues distant.” Lahontan mentions in his book of travels that the Dakotas, some years previous to 1688, had fought with the Iroquois on an island in the Mississippi.

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In the State Cabinet at Albany, N. Y., there is a very old pipe made of red-stone from the sacred quarry in Minnesota. There is a tradition in relation to this pipe, that it was

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taken from a Sioux many years ago, by one of a war party of Senecas, (a branch of the Iroquois,) that had gone into the Sioux country. It bears marks of severe usage and antiquity, for the original orifice in which the stone was inserted, has given place to a new one.

Upon the maps accompanying the several editions of Hennepin's travels, the *Tintonha* are marked as being west of Sauk Rapids. After the French had commenced trading on the upper Mississippi, this division of the Dakotas seem to have retired from the region of the Mississippi, towards the sources of the Minnesota, where there was an abundance of buffaloes. In a map communicated to the Royal Academy of Paris, in 1710, they are marked as the wandering nation of *Tintons* . In De L'Isle's map of the Mississippi prepared about 1725, Lac-qui-Parle is represented as surrounded with “ *Tinton* ” lodges, and their neighbors on the south and west, yet east of the Missouri, are the *Mahas*, *Aricarees* , and *Iowas* .

The *Tintonwans* or *Teetwawns* of the present day comprise at least one-half of the Dakota nation. Culbertson , who visited this country in 1850, at the request of the Smithsonian Institution, states that they number over 2000 lodges. They are divided into seven sub-tribes, and these again into various bands.

2. *The Ihanktonwans* .—Pronunciation, *E-hawnk-twawns* . Usually spelled Yanktons. Signification, Village at the end. Country, basin of the river A'Jacques. Number of lodges, 300, from eight to ten persons to a lodge.

3. *The I-hank-ton-wan-nan* .—Country, west of the Yanktons and north of the Missouri. Number of lodges, 350.

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## SEOUX OF THE MINNESOTA AND MISSISSIPPI.

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1. *The Sissitonwans* ( *Seeseetoans* .) Signification not satisfactorily ascertained. Supposed by the late Joseph Renville , and others, to mean “The Marsh Village.” Dr. Williamson , late missionary at Kaposia, speaking of the *Chongonsketon* , mentioned by Carver , says “they are probably the same who are called by Le Sueur , *Songasquitos* , and by Hennepin , *Chongasketon* , the ancestors of the *Sissitonwan* , as we infer from these facts, that the name *Sissiton* is not found in any of the older writers, all of whom mention the *Chongasketon* , putting them between the *Medewakantons* or *Isanyati* , and the *Ihanctons* and *Titons* , which is the limitation of the *Sissitons* , and the *Sissitonwan* of Lake Travers, who are still called the *Chonkasketonwan* , that is “Dwellers in a Fort.” Present population, 2500 souls. Country, Lake Traverse and Coteau des Prairies.

2. *Wahpetonwans* .—Pronunciation, *Wahpaytoans* . Signification, Village of the Leaves, from the fact, probably, that they once lived in the forest. “The old home of this band is about the Little Rapids of the Minnesota. About 300 still reside there, but the majority have removed to Lac-qui-Parle and Big Stone Lake.” In all, they number about 1000 or 1200 souls. In company with the *Sissitonwans* , they concluded a treaty with the United States at Traverse des Sioux, on July 23, 1851, in which they agreed to cede all of the lands east of Sioux River and Lake Traverse.

3. *The Wahpekutes* .—( *Wok-pay-koo-tays* .) Signification, The Leaf Shooters. Country, Cannon river and Blue Earth Valleys. Population, 600 souls.

4. *The M'dewahkantonwans* .—( *Med-ay-waw-kawn-twawns* .) With this division of the Dakotas, the inhabitants of Saint Paul are familiar. The signification of the word is “People of the Spirit Lake ” and they are so called because 261 their chief residence was formerly *M'dewakon* , Spirit Lake—the Mille Lacs of our modern maps. When Le Sueur built his post near the mouth of Blue Earth, they were residing at Mille Lacs, and from his narrative we learn that they were the first division of the Dakotas with whom the French traded,

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and on account of their possession of fire arms, they claimed to be superior to the other divisions of the nation.

At a very early date we learn from Charlevoix , and the maps of his age, that there was a large French trading post on an island some 10 or 15 miles below the St. Croix River, in which the voyageurs deposited their furs and often wintered. Dakota tradition asserts that there was also a trading establishment a little above Banfil's mill, (Rice creek,) on the Mississippi. This induced them to leave their old haunts and erect their teepees around the house of the white man.

My friend, Rev. G. H. Pond , to whose conversations and manuscripts I am largely indebted for the knowledge I have of this tribe, remarks that "the Indians would hunt in the direction where the interests of the trade required, and their home would be in the vicinity of the trade, where they learned to depend for a thousand little articles which gratified their desires, if they did not add to their comfort.

"When to this we add the fact, that traders taught them to plant corn, which actually took the place of wild rice, nothing was wanting to bring the *Medewakantonwans* south to the Minnesota river. Accordingly, tradition tells us that this division of the Dakotas no sooner became acquainted with traders, and the advantages of the trade, than they erected their teepees around the log hut of the white man, and hunted in the direction of the Minnesota river, returning in the 'rice gathering moon,' (September,) to the rice swamps nearest their friends. Hence the country 262 along Rice creek became a common centre for their division of the Dakota tribe."

Under the influence of French, and subsequently English traders, this division was divided into small bands, and the expert hunter became of as much consequence as the successful war chief, inasmuch as the skin of an otter, or martin, was far more valuable at Montreal, Paris, or London, than the clotted scalp of an Ojibway. The oldest band of this division is Black Dog's , formerly called *Tetankatane* , (Old Village,) now called *Ma-ga-*



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*yu-teshni* . Their tradition asserts that many years ago, they all lived in one village on the banks of the Minnesota, near Pinnishaw's village, and in sight of the residence of Peter Quinn .

When Carver , the British traveler, more than half a century subsequent to the exploration of Le Sueur , passed through the country, he found Sioux villages on the Mississippi. He remarks that “near the river St. Croix, reside three bands of the *Naudowessie* Indians, called the river bands,” and adds that they numbered about 400 warriors. In 1805, about half a century ago, this division of the Dakotas was subdivided into four bands. Pike , then a lieutenant, afterwards a general in the U. S. A., remarks: “It is necessary to divide the Sioux nation into the different bands as distinguished among themselves, in order to have a correct idea of them. Agreeably to this plan, I shall begin with the *Minowa Kantong* , who extend from Prairie des Chien to La Prairie des Francois, thirty-five miles up the St. Peters, (now Minnesota.) This band is subdivided into four divisions, under different chiefs. The *first* of which most generally reside at their village on the upper Iowa River, above the Prairie des Chien, and are commanded by Wabashaw , a chief whose father was considered the first chief of all the Sioux nation. The *second subdivision* resides near the head of Lake Pepin. The *third subdivision* resides between 263 Riviere au Cannon (Cannon River) and the entrance of the St. Peters (Minnesota.) Their principal hunting ground is on the St. Croix. They have a village at a place called the Grand Marais, (now Pig's Eye,) five miles below the entrance of the St. Peters (Minnesota.) It is situated on the east bank of the Mississippi, and consists of eleven log huts. The *fourth subdivision* is situated on the entrance of St. Peters to the Prairie des Francois. They have one village, nine miles up the St. Peters, on the north side.”

Keating , in his narrative of Major Long's Expedition to the Selkirk Settlement, in 1823, found the *M'dewakantonwans* divided into the same number of villages as at present, though their locality was not precisely the same. His enumeration is as follows:

Lodges. Warriors. Souls. 1. Keoxa, (WABASHAW'S band,) 40 70 400 2. Eambosandata, (RED) WING'S) 10 25 100 3. Kapoga, (PETIT CORBEAU'S,) 30 20 300 4. Oanoska,

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(BLACK DOG'S,) 30 40 200 5. Tetankatane, 10 30 150 6. Taoapa, 30 60 300 7. Weakaote. 10 10 50 1500

At the present time [1853] there are seven bands of *M'dewakantonwans* . 1. Tintatonwan. Village on the prairie situated 25 miles from Fort Snelling, on the south side of Minnesota River. Principal chief, Shok-pe-dan , (Shokpedan,) or Little Six . 2. O-ya-tay-shee-ka (Bad People.) Principal chief, Ta-can-ku-wash-tay , known by the whites as Good Road . Situation, eight miles from Fort Snelling, on the south side of Minnesota. 3. Reyataotonwe, (Island People,) so called because, until a very few years since, they lived at Lake Calhoun. Principal chief, Marpie-wee-kash-tah , or Sky-man . Situation, Oak Grove. Black Dog Village, also called Ma-ga-yu-tesh-ni. They do 264 not eat geese, because they have found a ready market for all that they killed at the garrison. Principal chief, Mazarota , “ Grey Iron ;” also called Pa-wa-ya-zan , “My Head Aches.” Situation, on the Minnesota, four miles above Mendota. 5. Kapoga, (Light,) because they were lightfooted, or swift pedestrians. Principal chief, Ta-o-ya-tedu-ta , “ His Scarlet People .” Called by the whites, “ Little Crow .” Situation, four miles below St. Paul, on west side of river. A quarter century ago they dwelt at “Pig's Eye,” on the east side. 6. Remnica, (hill, water, and wood,) because it is near a high bluff, and well situated in respect to water and wood; commonly called Red Wing. Situation five miles above the head of Lake Pepin, at the base of La Grange bluff. Population 300. Contains twenty-four bark or log houses. 7. Ki-yuk-sa, “Break in two,” (because they disregard an old custom, and marry their blood relations,) commonly known as Wabashaw's village. Principal chief, Wakute , (Wahkootay,) Bounding Wind . Situation, Wabashaw Prairie, below Lake Pepin. In October, 1851, the population of the *M'dewakantonwans* was 1750 souls.

## LANGUAGE.

The Dakotas, from the Mississippi to the plains beyond the Missouri, speak essentially the same language; a language difficult of acquisition, and wholly differing from the Ojibway, though allied to that of the Ottoes and Winnebagoes. After ten years close study by an observing missionary, he was obliged to confess that he had not mastered

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it, which admission forms quite a contrast to the vaunting statement of Jonathan Carver , who wintered in Minnesota in 1767. He remarks: "To render my stay as comfortable as possible, I first endeavored to learn their language. This I soon did, to make myself perfectly intelligible."

Hennepin made the first effort to collect a vocabulary of 265 the language, while he was a captive on Rum River, or Mille Lacs. His description of the attempt is very quaint: "Hunger pressed me to commence the formation of a vocabulary of their language, learned from the prattle of their children. When once I had learned the word *Taketchiabein* , which means" How call you this ?" I began to be soon able to talk of such things as are most familiar. For want of an interpreter this difficulty was hard to surmount at first. For example, if I had a desire to know what "to run" was in their tongue, I was forced to increase my speed and actually run from one end of the lodge to the other, until they understood what I meant and had told me the word, which I presently set down in my dictionary."

The first printed vocabulary is that appended to Carver's travels, which is exceedingly incorrect, though it contains many Dakota words. During the present year, the Smithsonian Institution have published, under the patronage of the Historical Society of Minnesota, a quarto Grammar and Dictionary of this language, which will be gazed upon with interest by the "wise men of the east," long after the Dakota dialect has ceased to be spoken. This work is the fruit of eighteen years of anxious toil among this people, and is the combined work of the members of the Dakota Presbytery, edited by the Rev. S. R. Riggs , of Lac-qui-Parle; and should be preserved in the library of every professional man, and lover of letters in the Territory.

The vocabulary of the Dakota language is, of course, meagre compared with that of the civilized European; for living, as they have until of late, far away from any but those of like habits and modes of thought, they are defective in many words which have their place in the dictionary of a Christian people. Accustomed to cut poles from a forest and spread buffalo skins thereon, under which they pass the night, and then decamp early

the next day in quest of game 266 or the scalp of an enemy, they have no word which expresses the comfortable idea of our noble Saxon word "home." Still, in the language of a missionary, "it is in some of its aspects to be regarded as a noble language, fully adequate to all the felt wants of a nation, and capable of being enlarged, cultivated and enriched by the introduction of foreign stores of thought. Nothing can be found anywhere more full and flexible than the Dakota verb. The affixes, and reduplications, and pronouns, and prepositions, all come in to make of it such a stately pile of thought as is to my knowledge found nowhere else. A single paradigm presents more than a thousand variations."

### RELIGION.

The Dakotas, in their religious belief, are polytheists. The hunter, as he passes over the plains, finds a granite boulder; he stops and prays to it, for it is "*Wakan*," mysterious or supernatural. At another time, he will pray to his dog; and at another time, to the sun, moon, or stars. In every leaf, in every stone, in every shrub, there is a spirit. It may be said of them, as Cotton Mather said of the Massachusetts Indians, in his *Life of Eliot* : "All the religion they have amounts to thus much: they believe that there are many gods, who made and own the several nations of the world. They believe that every remarkable creature has a peculiar god within or about it; there is with them a sun god or a moon god, and the like; and they cannot conceive but that the fire must be a kind of god, inasmuch as a spark of it will soon produce very strange effects. They believe that when any good or ill happens to them, there is the favor or anger of a god expressed in it." The Dakotas have greater and minor deities, and they are supposed to multiply as men and animals, and the superior to have power to exterminate the inferior.

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Oanktayhee .—The Jupiter Maximus of the Dakotas is styled Oanktayhee . Like the ancient Hebrews avoided speaking the name of Jehovah , they dislike to speak the name of this deity, but call him "*Taku-wakan*," or "That which is supernatural." This mighty god manifests himself as a large ox. His eyes are as large as the moon. He can haul in

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his horns and tail, or he can lengthen them, as he pleases. From him proceed invisible influences. In his horns and tail reside mighty powers of each sex.

He is said to have created the earth in the following manner: Assembling in grand conclave all of the water animals, he ordered them to bring up dirt from beneath the water, and proclaimed death to the disobedient. The beaver and others forfeited their lives. At last, the muskrat went beneath the waters, and after a long time, appeared at the surface nearly exhausted, with some dirt. From this, Oanktayhee fashioned the earth into a large circular plain.

He made man in this manner: The earth being finished, he took a deity, one of his own offspring, and grinding him to powder, sprinkled it upon the earth, and this produced many worms. The worms were then collected and scattered again. They matured into infants, and these were then collected and scattered and became full grown Dakotas.

The bones of the mastodon, the Dakotas think, are those of Oanktayhee , and they preserve them with the greatest of care in the medicine bag. It is the belief of the Dakotas that the Rev. R. Hopkins , who was drowned at Traverse des Sioux on July 4th, 1851, was killed by Oanktayhee , who dwells in the waters, because Mr. H. had preached against him.

Wahkeenyan .—The name of another one of the superior divinities is Wahkeenyan . His teepee is supposed to be on a mound on the top of a high mountain, in the far West. The teepee or tent has four openings, with sentinels clothed in red down. A butterfly is stationed at the east, a bear at the west, a fawn at the south, and a reindeer at the north entrance. He is supposed to be a gigantic bird, the flapping of whose wings makes thunder. He has a bitter enmity against Oanktayhee and attempts to kill his offspring. The high water of last year was supposed to be caused by his shooting through the earth, and allowing the water to flow out. When the lightning strikes their teepees or the ground, they

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think that Oanktayhee was near the surface of the earth, and that Wahkeenyan in great rage, fired a hot thunderbolt at him.

Taku-shkan-shkan .—This deity is supposed to be invisible, yet everywhere present. He is full of revenge, exceedingly wrathful, very deceitful, and a searcher of hearts. His favorite haunts are the four winds, and the granite boulders strewn on the plains of Minnesota. He is never so happy as when he beholds scalps warm and reeking with blood.

Heyoka , ( *the anti-natural god* ).—There are four persons in this godhead. The *first* appears like a tall and slender man with two faces, like the Janus of ancient Mythology. Apollo-like, he holds a bow in his hand streaked with red lightning, also a rattle of deer claws. The *second* is a little old man with a cocked hat and enormous ears, holding a yellow bow. The *third* , a man with a flute suspended from his neck. The *fourth* is invisible and mysterious, and is the gentle zephyr which moves the grass and causes the ripple of the water.

Heyoka is a perfect paradox. He calls bitter sweet, and sweet bitter; he groans when he is full of joy; he laughs when he is in distress; he calls black white, and white black; when he wishes to tell the truth he speaks a lie, and when he desires to lie he speaks the truth; in winter he goes naked, and in summer he wraps up in buffalo robes. 269 The little hills on the prairies are called *Hay-o-kah tee* , or the house of Hay-o-kah . Those whom he inspires can make the winds blow and the rain fall, the grass to grow and wither.

### WAKAN, OR MEDICINE MAN.

In all nations where the masses are unenlightened, their spiritual nature is uncultivated, and they believe whatever a class of men pretending to have authority from the spirit world, may impose upon them. All ignorant communities are superstitious and easily priest-ridden. The early Britons looked upon the Druids as a supernatural and wonder-working class, and they fed and feared them. The *Wahkawn* , or Medicine men, hold the same relation to the Dakotas as the Druids to the ancient Britons. They are the

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most powerful and influential of the tribe. They are looked upon as a species of demi-gods. They assert their origin to be miraculous. At first, they are spiritual existences, encased in a seed of some description of a winged nature, like the thistle. Wafted by the breeze to the dwelling place of the gods, they are received to intimate communion. After being instructed in relation to the mysteries of the spirit world, they go forth to study the character of all tribes. After deciding upon a residence, they enter the body of some one about to become a mother, and are ushered by her into the world. A great majority of the M'dewakantonwans are Medicine men.

When an individual desires to belong to this priesthood, he is initiated by what is termed a "Medicine Dance." This dance is said to have been instituted by Oanktayhee , the patron of Medicine men. The editor of the Dakota *Friend* , in a description of this dance, remarks:

"When a member is received into this Society, it is his duty to take the hot bath four days in succession. In the mean time, some of the *elders* of the society instruct him in the mysteries of the medicine, and 270 Wahmnoo- *h ah*—shell in the throat. He is also provided with a dish ( *wojute* ) and spoon. On the side of the dish is sometimes carved the head of some voracious animal, in which resides the spirit of Eeyah (glutton god). This dish is always carried by its owner to the Medicine Feast, and it is his duty, ordinarily, to eat all which is served up in it. Grey Iron has a dish which was given him at the time of his initiation, on the bottom of which is carved a bear complete. The candidate is also instructed with what paints and in what manner he shall paint himself, which must always be the same, when he appears in the dance. There is supernatural virtue in this paint and the manner in which it is applied, and those who have not been furnished with a better by the regular war prophets, wear it into battle as a life preserver. The bag contains besides, the claws of animals with the toauwan of which they can, it is believed, inflict painful diseases and death on whomsoever and whenever they desire.

"The candidate being thus duly prepared for initiation, and having made the necessary offerings for the benefit of the institution, on the evening of the day previous to the

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dance, a lodge is prepared, and from ten to twenty of the more substantial members pass the night in singing, dancing and feasting. In the morning, the tent is opened for the dance. After a few appropriate ceremonies preliminary to the grand operation, the candidate takes his place on a pile of blankets which he has contributed for the mysterious operation naked except the breech-cloth and moccasins, duly painted and prepared for the mysterious operation. An elder having been stationed in the rear of the novice, the master of the ceremonies, with his knee and hip joints bent to an angle of about forty-five degrees, advances with an unsteady, unnatural step, with his bag in his *hand*, uttering “ *Heen, heen, heen* ,” with great energy, and raising the bag near a painted spot on the breast of the candidate, gives the discharge, the person stationed in the rear gives him a push forward at the same instant, and as he falls headlong, throws the blankets over him. Then while the dancers gather around him and chant, the master throws off the covering, and chewing a piece of the bone of the Oanktay *hee*, spirits it over him, and he revives and resumes a sitting posture. All then return to their scuts except the master; he approaches and making indescribable noises, pats upon the breast of the novice, till the latter, in agonizing throes, heaves up the Wahmnoo- *h ah* or shell, which falls from his mouth upon the bag which had been previously spread before him for that purpose. Life being now completely restored, and with the mysterious shell in his open hand, the new made member passes around and exhibits it to all the members and to the wondering bystanders, and the ceremonies of initiation are closed. 271 The dance continues, interspersed with shooting each other, rests, smoking and taking refreshments, till they have jumped to the music of four sets of singers. Besides vocal music, they make use of the drum and the gourd-shell rattle. The following chants which are used in the dance, will best exhibit the character of this mysterious institution of the Oanktay *hee* :

Waduta ohna micage. Waduta ohna micage Miniyata ite waken de maqu, Tunkanixdan

( Translation .)



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He created it for me inclosed in red down. He created it for me inclosed in red down. He in the water with a mysterious visage gave me this, My grandfather.

Tunkanixdan pejihuta wakan micage, He wicake. Miniyata oicage wakan kin maqu ye, Tunkanixdan its kin yuwinta wo. Wahutopa yuha ite yawinto wo.

( Translation .)

My grandfather created for me mysterious medicine, That is true. The mysterious being in the water gave it to me. Stretch out your hand before the face of my grandfather, Having a quadruped, stretch out your hand before him.”

Where the science of medicine is not understood, the inhabitants are very superstitious concerning the sick. Those who are prominent in their devotion to the sacred rites of a heathen tribe, generally act as physicians. The Druids of the early Britons performed the duties of doctors, and the conjurers, or medicine men, as they are generally termed, are called to attend the sick Dakotas. This tribe of Indians (as is natural) are well acquainted with the bones of the body, but no Dr. Hunter has yet risen among them to explain the circulation of the blood, and therefore they have but a single word for nerves, arteries and veins. When a young man is sick, he is generally well watched, but old persons, and those that have some deformity, are often neglected. 272 To effect a cure, they often practice what is called steaming. They erect a small tent covered with thick buffalo robes, in which they place some hot stones. Stripping the sick person of his blanket, they place him in the tent. Water is then thrown upon the hot stones, which creates considerable vapor. After the patient has been confined in this close tent for some time, and has perspired profusely, they occasionally take him out and plunge him into the waters of an adjacent river or lake.

This custom is very ancient. One of the first white men who appear to have resided amongst them, was a Franciscan priest named Hennepin . He was made their prisoner in the year 1680, while traveling on the Mississippi, above the Wisconsin river. The Dakotas

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took him to their villages on the shores of Rum river, at Mille Lac, where he was quartered in a chief's lodge, whose name was Aquipaguetin . The chief observing that Hennepin was much fatigued, ordered an oven to be made, which, to use the words of the Franciscan, "he ordered me to enter, stark naked, with four savages. The oven was covered With buffalo hides, and in it they placed red-hot flint and other stones. They ordered me to hold my breath, as long as I could. As soon as the savages that were with me let go their breath, which they did with a great force, Aquipaguetin began to sing. The others seconded him, and laying their hands on my body began to rub, and at the same time cry bitterly. I was near fainting and forced to leave the oven. At my coming out, I could scarcely take up my cloak. However, they continued to make me sweat thrice a week, which at last restored me to my former vigor."

When a Dakota is very sick, the friends call in a conjurer or medicine man. Before we proceed, it is proper to explain the meaning of the term "medicine man." Anything that is mysterious or wonderful, the Dakotas call "*Wahkawn* ." 273 The early explorers and traders in Minnesota were French, and they always call a doctor "medicine." As the Indian doctors are all dealers in mysteries, the word "medicine," has at last obtained a local signification, meaning anything that is mysterious or unaccountable. A "medicine man" means then, a doctor who calls to his aid charms and incantations. The medicine men are divided into war prophets and conjurers or doctors.

A Dakota, when he is sick, believes that he is possessed by the spirit of some animal, or insect, or enemy. The medicine men are supposed to have great power of suction in their jaws, by which they can draw out the spirit that afflicts the patient and thus restore him to health. They are much feared by all the tribe. The doctor is called to see a sick person by sending some one with a present of a horse or blankets or something as valuable. The messenger sometimes carries a bell and rings around the lodge until the conjurer makes his appearance; at other times he bears to the Doctor's lodge a lighted pipe, and presenting it to him, places his hands on his head and moans.

"The person sent to call on the Doctor, strips himself for running, retaining only his breech-cloth, and carrying a bell. He enters the lodge, and without further ceremony, strikes the Doctor with his foot, jingles his bell, and suddenly issuing from the lodge, runs with all his might for the sick man's lodge, with the Doctor at his heels. If the latter overtakes and kicks him before he reaches the lodge, he does not proceed any further, but returns home. Another person is then despatched, and it is not until one is sent that is too swift for him, that the Doctor's services can be secured."—( *Dakota Friend*, June , 1852.) 17

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The Doctor having entered the tent, without touching the patient, begins to strip himself, leaving nothing upon his body but the breech cloth and moccasins. Having obtained a sacred rattle, which is nothing more than a dried gourd, filled with a few kernels of corn, or beads, he begins to shake and sing in unearthly monotones. He now gets upon his knees, and to use a vulgarism, "crawls on all fours" up to his patient. After a few moments we see him rise again retching violently, and picking up a bowl of water thrusts his face therein, and begins to make a gurgling noise. Into this bowl he professed to expectorate the spirit which has incited the disease. The Doctor having decided what animal has possessed his patient, he has an image of the animal made out of bark and placed outside near the tent door, in a vessel of water. Mr. Prescott , U. S. Interpreter at Fort Snelling, in a communication upon this subject says: "The animal made of bark is to be shot. Two or three Indians are in waiting, standing near the bowl, with loaded guns, ready to shoot when the conjurer gives the signal. To be sure that the conjuring shall have the desired effect, a woman must stand astride the bowl, when the men fire into it, with her dress raised as high as the knees. The men are instructed how to act by the conjuror; and as soon as he makes his appearance out of doors, they all fire into the bowl; and blow the little bark animal to pieces. The woman steps aside, and the juggler makes a jump at the bowl on his hands and knees, and commences blubbing in the water. While this is going on, the woman has to jump on the juggler's back and stand there a moment, then she gets off, and as soon as he has finished his incantations, the woman takes him by the hair of

his head and pulls him back into the lodge. If there are 275 any fragments found of the animal that has been shot, they are buried. If this does not cure, a similar ceremony is performed, but some other kind of animal is shaped out.”

### **FONDNESS FOR WAR.**

Among the earliest songs to which a Dakota child listens are those of war. As soon as he begins to totter about, he carries as a plaything a miniature bow and arrow. The first thing he is taught as great and truly noble is taking a scalp, and he pants to perform an act which is so manly. At the age of sixteen he is often on the war path. When a boy is of the proper age to go to war, he is presented with weapons, or he makes a war club. He then consecrates certain parts of animals, which he vows not to eat. After he has killed an enemy he is at liberty to eat of any one of those portions of an animal from which he agreed to abstain. If he kills another person, the prohibition is taken off from another part until finally he has emancipated himself from his oath by his bravery. Before young men go out on a war party, they endeavor to propitiate the patron deity by a feast. During the hours of night they celebrate the “armor feast,” which is distinguished by drumming, singing, and agonizing shrieks.

The war prophets or priests, by the narrating of pretended dreams, or by inspiring oratory incite the tribe against an enemy. If a party are successful in securing scalps, they paint themselves black and return home in mad triumph. As they approach their village, those who are there run forth to greet them, and strip them of their clothes and supply them with others. The scalp is very carefully prepared for exhibition, being painted red and stretched upon a hoop which is fastened to a 276 pole. If the scalp is from a man it is decked with an eagle's feather; if from a woman with a comb. At a scalp dance which we once attended at Kaposia, the braves stood on one side of the circle drumming and rattling, and shouting a monotonous song, reminding one of a ditty of the chimney sweeps of a city. The women, standing opposite to the men, advanced and retreated from the men, squeaking in an unearthly manner a sort of chorus. This is the chief dance in which the women engage. If

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a scalp is taken in summer, they dance until the falling of the leaves; if in winter, until the leaves begin to appear. When the scalp is freshly painted, as it is four times, it is a great occasion. After their mad orgies have ceased, they burn or bury it.

You may have noticed, perhaps, an eagle's feather with a red spot, in the head of some of those Indians walking through our streets. It is a badge that the possessor has killed a foe. If the feather is notched and bordered with red, or dipped and topped with red, it signifies that a throat has been cut. The red hand on a blanket shows that the woman has been wounded by an enemy; but the black hand, that he has killed his enemy. The Dakotas, like other savages in war, show no sympathy for sex, infancy or old age. At Pokeguma, the Kaposia band scalped two little girls that attended the mission school; buried a tomahawk in their brains, severed the hands from the bodies, and then set them up in the sand.\* Mr. Riggs narrates an incident of some of the upper bands of Dakotas pursuing a weak Ojibwa mother. To save her life she swam a stream. Half naked she reached the opposite bank, and dropped down too much exhausted to attempt to proceed. With the delight of demons just let loose from hell, her pursuers came over, stabbed and scalped her. Prematurely ushering her

\* See battle of Lake Pokeguma. Page 177.

277 unborn babe into existence, they dashed its brains out upon the ground. Returning with a poor, sick mother's scalp, they came home as "conquering heroes come," and were received with pride and honor. Such is savage Warfare, and the savage idea of what constitutes true glory. But, notwithstanding their horrid mode of warfare, they are not destitute of affection for their own offspring or friends.

### **FAMILY AFFECTION.**

They assert that a mother is with her absent children whenever they think of her, and that she feels a pain in her breast (or heart) whenever anything of moment happens to them. When a child dies, like Rachel, they refuse to be comforted. The following paraphrase of

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the lament of a bereaved Indian mother, prepared for the "Dakota Friend," is full of poetry: " *Me choonkshe, me choonkshe* ,(my daughter my daughter,) alas! alas! My hope, my comfort has departed, my heart is very sad. My joy is turned into sorrow, and my song into wailing. Shall I never behold thy sunny smile? Shall I never more hear the music of thy voice? The Great Spirit has entered my lodge in anger, and taken thee from me, my first born and only child, I am comfortless and must wail out my grief. The pale faces repress their sorrow, but we children of nature must give vent to ours or die. *Me choonkshe, me choonkshe* .

"The light of my eyes is extinguished; all, all is dark. I have cast from me all comfortable clothing and robed myself in comfortless skins, for no clothing, no fire, can warm thee, my daughter. Unwashed and uricombed, I will mourn for thee, whose long locks I can never more braid; and whose cheeks I can never again tinge with vermillion. I will cut off my dishevelled hair, for my grief is great, *me choonkshe, me choonkshe* . How can I survive thee? How can I be happy, and you a homeless wanderer to the spirit 278 land? How can I eat if you are hungry? I will go to the grave with food for your spirit. Your bowl and spoon are placed in your coffin for use on the journey. The feast for your playmates has been made at the place of interment. Knowest thou of their presence? *Me choonkshe, me choonkshe* .

"When Spring returns, the choicest of ducks shall be your portion. Sugar and berries also, shall be placed near your grave. Neither grass nor flowers shall be allowed to grow thereon. Affection for thee, will keep the little mound desolate, like the heart from which thou art torn. My daughter, I come, I come. I bring you parched corn. Oh, how long will you sleep? The Wintry winds wait your requiem. The cold earth is your bed, and the colder snow thy covering. I would that they were mine. I will lie down by thy side. I will sleep once more with you. If no one discovers me, I shall soon be as cold as thou art, and together we will sleep that long, long sleep from which I cannot awake thee, *me choonkshe, me choonkshe* ."

## **DAKOTA MARRIAGE.**

A Dakota obtains his wives (for they are polygamists) not by courtship, but by a practice as old as the book of Genesis, that of purchase. A young man, when he wants a wife, announces the fact and begs his friends to give him an outfit. He then proceeds to the parents and makes a purchase. The ancestors of some of the first families of Virginia, purchased their wives from the London company, for one hundred and twenty or fifty pounds of tobacco, at three shillings a pound, but a Dakota pays a higher price for the article and takes more. Usually they pay a horse, or four or five guns, or six or eight blankets, a value equal to thirty or forty dollars.

The chief of the Kaposia band has three wives, who are 279 sisters. His second wife he purchased of her father while he was drunk, and she but ten years of age. It is said that a friend throws a blanket over the bride and bears her to the lodge of the purchaser. Though a son-in-law lives near the parents of his wife, he never names or talks to them, and never looks his wife's mother in the face. He thinks it is respectful to act in this manner. He occupies a large lodge, while his wife's parents frequently live in a small one, in the rear, whom he supplies with game until he has a family of his own. Should the parents accidentally meet him, they hide their faces. If the mother starts for the daughter's lodge and perceives her husband inside, she does not enter.

If a woman proves faithless to her husband, she is frequently shot or has her nose cut off. This latter practice was noticed by Le Sueur, in 1700. There is much system in relation to the place in which each should sit in a Dakota lodge. The wife always occupies a place next to the entrance, on the right. The seat of honor, to which a white man is generally pointed, is directly opposite to the door of the lodge.

Like the rest of mankind, they are by no means insensible to flattery. When a Dakota thinks that he cannot obtain a horse, or some other article that he wishes, by a simple request, he will take a number of wood-peckers' heads and sing over them in the presence

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of the individual he hopes to influence, recounting the honorable deeds of the man to whom he gives the birds' heads. This process acts like a charm, and is often successful.

### **LOVE OF FINERY.**

A Parisian dandy is known the world over, but he is not to be compared with a Dakota fop. An Indian young man passes hours in attiring himself. That green streak of 280 paint upon the cheek; those yellow circles around the eyes, and those spots upon the forehead, have cost him much trouble and frequent gazings into his mirror, which he always keeps with him. That head-dress, which appears to hang so carelessly, is all designed. None knows better than he how to attitudinize and play the majestic or stoic. No moustachioed clerk, with curling locks, and kid gloves, and cambric handkerchief, and patent-leather boots, and glossy hat, is half so conscious as he who struts past us with his streaming blanket and ornamented and uncovered head, holding a pipe or a gun in the place of a cane, and wearing moccasins in the place of boots. The rain upon his nicely decorated head and face, causes as much of a flutter as it does when it falls upon the hat of the nice young man who smokes his cigar and promenades in Broadway.

### **SPORTS.**

When the Dakotas are not busy with war, or the chase, or the feasts and dances of their religion, time hangs heavily, and they either sleep or resort to some game to keep up an excitement. One of their games is like "Hunt the Slipper;" a bullet or plum stone is placed by one party in one of four moccasins or mittens and sought for by the opposite. There is also the play of "plum stones." At this game much is often lost and won. Eight plum stones are marked with certain devices. This garnets played by young men and females. If, after shaking in a bowl, stones bearing certain devices turn up, the game is won.

The favorite and most exciting game of the Dakotas is ball playing. It appears to be nothing more than a game which was often played by the writer in school-boy days, and which was called "*shinny*." A smooth place is chosen on the prairie or frozen river or lake.



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Each player has a stick three or four feet long and crooked at the lower end, 281 with deer strings tied across forming a sort of a pocket. The ball is made of a rounded knot of wood, or clay covered with hide, and is supposed to possess supernatural qualities. Stakes are set at a distance of a quarter or half mile, as bounds. Two parties are then formed, and the ball being thrown up in the centre, the contest is for one party to carry the ball from the other beyond one of the bounds. Two or three hundred men are sometimes engaged at once. On a summer's day, to see them rushing to and fro, painted in divers colors, with no article of apparel, with feathers in their heads, bells around their wrists, and fox and wolf tails dangling behind, is a wild and noisy spectacle. The eye-witnesses among the Indians become more interested in the success of one or the other of the parties than any crowd at a horse race, and frequently stake their last piece of property on the issue of the game.

Last summer, on one Sunday morning, Shakopay or Little Six's band moved down to Oak Grove, the residence of Gideon H. Pond , late editor of the “ *Dakota Friend* ,” to play ball against the three bands of Good Road, Sky Man , and Grey Iron . He thus describes the scene:

“On Sunday, July, 13th. 1852, Six's band moved down to Oak Grove, previous arrangements having been made, to play against the three bands of Good Road, Sky Man , and Grey Iron . The next day the game came off. The property bet was sixteen guns, six of which were double-barrels; eight horses and blankets, calicoes, belts, garters, &c., without number—worth at least \$800. This was met by the same, or what was of equal value, by the other party—making the whole amount staked on the game \$1,600. Not far from two hundred and fifty men and boys joined in the play, and the spectators numbered between two and three hundred. Six's band won the prize. Two more games were played, both of which were also won by Six's band, but the amount of property staked on the last two games was much less than that named above, say \$1,000 for the two, which makes \$2,600. And then they adjourned till next day.

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“ *Tuesday , 15 th .*—At 11 o'clock the ball was again set in motion, and the stake was taken by those who lost yesterday; and on the second 282 game, that which was lost on the first game yesterday, was recovered by Good Road, Sky Man and Grey Iron . The success to-day, was attributed to the wakon virtues of the ball which was used. It was made long ago by the old War-prophet, Ehakeku , formerly of Wabashaw's band; the same who fired the old council-house at St. Peters, some years ago. Near the close of the play, Visible-mouth , a young “Medicine-man,” received a blow from a ball club on his side immediately over the place where the Medicine-god lies in him, which felled him to the earth. It was said that the god was stupefied by the blow; but was soon reanimated by the wakon applications of the Medicine-men present. After the victors had challenged Six to play another game to-morrow, they adjourned to the lodges to despatch a barrel of pork, two kegs of lard and ten sacks of corn. (which Sky-man's farmer had just arrived with from the Agency,) and make up the stake four to-morrow.

“ *Wednesday , 16 th , 10 o'clock .*—Parties met. Present the same as yesterday, viz: Six against Good Road, Sky Man and Grey Iron . Guns. blankets, coats, calicoes, tomahawks, pipes, beads, garters, belts, &c., &c., to the value of \$300 or \$400 were tied up, and the ball started. Six lost and the stake was renewed. Six lost again; but while a new stake was being made up, a dispute arose between the parties concerning some of the property which had been won from Six's band, but which they kept back. They broke up in a row, as they usually do. Grey Iron's band leaving the ground first, ostensibly for the reason above named, but *really* because Six's band had just been reinforced by the arrival of a company from Little Crow's band. Thus ended the ball play of three days continuance, during which time not less than \$4,600 worth of property had been bet. How can Dakotas be otherwise than poor?”

Like the ancient Greeks, they also practice foot racing. Before proceeding to other topics, it is well to give a brief account of the Dog dance and the Fish dance. The first is seldom performed, and is said to be peculiar to this nation. A dog being thrown into the midst of

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the Crowd of dancers, is speedily "tomahawked" by one of the sacred men. The liver is then extracted and cut into slices, after which it is hung upon a pole. Now the dancers hop around, their mouths apparently watering with the desire for a bite. After a time some one dances up to the pole and takes a mouthful of the raw liver. He is then succeeded by others, until the whole is devoured. If another dog is thrown into the circle the same process is repeated.

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"Not long since a Dakota chief was sick, and the gods signified to him that if he would make a *Raw-fish Feast*, he would live till young cranes' wings are grown. So he must make the feast or die. Fifteen or twenty others, who like himself were inspired by the cormorant, joined with him in the ceremonies of the feast, of which the chief was master.

"After one or two days spent in 'vapor baths' and 'armor feasts,' a tent is prepared, opening towards the east; the railing extending from the tent is composed of bushes. Within the enclosure each of those who are to participate in the feast has a bush set, in which is his nest. Early in the morning, on the day of the feast, the master informs two others where the fish are to be taken, and sends them forth to spear and bring them in, designating the kind of fish and the number to be taken. On this occasion two pike, each about one-foot in length, were taken, and after having been painted with vermilion and ornamented with red down about the mouth and along the back, were laid on some branches in the enclosure, entire as they were taken from the water. Near the fish were placed birch-bark dishes, filled with sweetened water. Their implements of war were solemnly exhibited in the tent, and the dancers, who were naked except the belt, breech-cloth and moccasins, and fantastically painted, and adorned with down, red and white, being in readiness, the singers, of whom there are four ranks, commenced to sing, each rank in its turn. The singing was accompanied with the drum and rattle.

"The cormorant dancers danced to the music, having a little season of rest as each rank of singers ended their chant, until the fourth rank struck the drum and made the welkin

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ring with their wild notes; then, like starving beasts, they tore off pieces of the fish, scales, bones, entrails and all, with their teeth, and swallowed it, at the same time drinking their sweetened water, till both the pike were consumed except the heads and fins and large bones, the latter of which were deposited in the nests. Thus the feast ended, and the chief will of course live till the young cranes can fly. At the close of the ceremony, whatever of clothing is worn on the occasion is offered in sacrifice to the gods,”

Already sufficient has been said to show that the Dakotas are Odd Fellows; but not the half has been told. Among the Ojibways there are totems, or family symbols, of the name of some ancestor, which is honored as much as the coat of arms among the nobility of Europe. If a man dies, his totem is marked upon his grave post with as much formality as the heraldic design of an English nobleman. It was this custom among the Algonquin Indians, that led the 284 unscrupulous La Hontan to publish engravings of the fabulous coats of arms of the various savage nations of the North-West. The arms of the “ *Outchipoues* (Ojibways) is an eagle perched upon a rock, devouring the brain of an owl. Those of the Sioux, or Dakotas, is a squirrel perched upon a citron or pumpkin and gnawing its rind. While the Dakotas do not appear to have totems or family designs, like the Ojibways, yet from time immemorial secret clans with secret signs have existed among them. It is impossible to force any member of these clans to divulge any of their proceedings. Culbertson, who visited the Dakotas of the Missouri in 1850 at the request of the Smithsonian Institution, was struck with this peculiarity. His remarks, for the entire accuracy of which we do not vouch, are as follows:

”The Sioux nation has no general council, but each tribe and band determine its own affairs. These bands have some ties of interest analogous to the ties of our secret societies. The ‘Crow-Feather-in-Cap’ band are pledged to protect each other's wives and to refrain from violating them. If the wife of one of their number is stolen by another of their number, she is returned, the band either paying the thief for returning the stolen property or forcing him to do it whether he will or not. \* \* \* \* The ‘Strong-Heart’ band is pledged to protect each other in their horses. Should a ‘Strong-Heart,’ from a distance steal some

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horses, and they be claimed by a brother 'Strong Heart,' his fellows would tell him that he must give them up or they would give the robbed man some of their own horses. regarding it as the greatest disgrace to themselves to allow him to go away on foot. And thus I suppose that all these bands have some common object that unites them together, and here we have the origin of this system of banding. In the absence of law, it takes the place of our system of justice."

### **MODE OF LIFE.**

The heathen, in their manner of life, are essentially the same all over the world. They are all given up to uncleanness. As you walk through a small village, in a christian land, you notice many appearances of thrift and neatness. 285 The day-laborer has his lot fenced and his rude cabin whitewashed. The widow, dependent upon her own exertions and alone in the world, finds pleasure in training the honeysuckle or the morning-glory to peep in at her windows. The poor seamstress, though obliged to lodge in some upper room, has a few flower-pots upon her window-sill, and perhaps a canary bird hung in a cage outside. But in an Indian village, all is filth and litter. There are no fences around their bark huts. White-washing is a lost art if it was ever known amongst them. Worn out moccasins, tattered blankets, old breech cloths and pieces of leggins are strewn in confusion all over the ground. Water, except in very warm weather, seldom touches their bodies, and the pores of their skins become filled with grease and the paint with which they daub themselves. Neither Monday, or any other day, is known as washing day. Their cooking utensils are encrusted with dirt, and used for a variety of purposes. A year or two ago, a band of Indians, with their dogs, ponies, women and children, came on board of a steamboat on the Upper Mississippi on which the writer was traveling. Their evening meal, consisting of beans and wild meat, was prepared on the lower deck, beneath the windows of the ladies' cabin. After they had used their fingers in the place of forks, and consumed the food which they had cooked in a dirty iron pan, one of the mothers, removing the blanket from one of her children, stood it up in the same pan, and then dipping some water out of the river, began to wash it from head to foot. The rest of the band looked on

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with Indian composure, and seemed to think that an iron stew-pan was just as good for washing babes as for cooking beans, When there is so much dirt, of course vermin must abound. They are not much distressed by the presence of those insects which are so nauseating to the civilized man. Being without shame, a common sight of 286 a summer's eve, is a woman or child with her head in another's lap, who is kindly killing the fleas and other vermin that are burrowing in the long, matted and uncombed hair.

The Dakotas have no regular time for eating. Dependent as they are, upon hunting and fishing for subsistence, they vascillate from the proximity of starvation to gluttony. It is considered uncourteous to refuse an invitation to a feast, and a single man will sometimes attend six or seven in a day, and eat intemperately. Before they came in contact with the whites, they subsisted upon venison, buffalo and dog meat. The latter animal has always been considered a delicacy by these epicures. In illustration of these remarks, I transcribe an extract from a journal of a missionary, who visited Lake Travers in April, 1839:

“Last evening at dark, our Indians chiefly returned, having eaten to the full of buffalo and dog meat. I asked one how many times they were feasted. He said ‘six. and if it had not become dark so soon, we should have been called three or four times more.’ \* \* \* This morning, ‘ Burning-Earth ,’ (Chief of the Sissetonwan Dakotas,) came again to our encampment, and removing we accompanied him to his village at the south-western end of the Lake. \* \* \* In the afternoon, I visited the chief: found him just about to leave for a dog feast to which he had been called. When he had received some papers of medicine I had for him, he left saying, ‘The Sioux (Dakotas) love dog meat as well as white people do pork.’”

In this connection, it should be stated that the Dakotas have no regular hours of retiring. Enter a new England village after nine o'clock and all is still. Walk through Philadelphia after the State-House clock has struck ten or eleven, and everybody and thing, hacks, hackmen, and those on foot, appear to be hastening to rest; the lamp in the store, the entry and parlor is extinguished and lights begin to flicker in the chambers and in the

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garrets, and soon the city is all quiet, except rogues and disorderly persons and those who are set to watch them; and you can hear the clock tick in the entry, and the watchman's slow step as 287 he walks up and down the street. But there is nothing like this in an Indian village. They sleep whenever inclination prompts; some by day and some by night.

If you were to enter the Dakota village, four miles below Saint Paul, at midnight, you might, perhaps, see some few huddled around the fire of a teepee, (as they call their wigwams), listening to the tale of an old warrior, who has often engaged in bloody conflict with their ancient and present enemies, the Ojibwas; or you might hear the unearthly chanting of some medicine man, endeavoring to exorcise some spirit from a sick man; or you might see some lounging about, whiffing out of their sacred red stone pipes, the smoke of kinnikinnick, a species of willow bark; or you might see some of the young men sneaking around a lodge, and waiting for the lodge-fire to cease to flicker before they perpetrate some deed of sin; or you might hear a low, wild drumming, and then a group of men, all naked, with the exception of a girdle round the loins, daubed with vermillion and other points, all excited, and engaged in some of their grotesque dances; or a portion may be firing their guns in the air, being alarmed by some imaginary evil, and supposing that an enemy is lurking around.

### **DAKOTA FEMALES**

Deserve the sympathy of every tender heart. From early childhood they lead "worse than a dog's life." Like the Gibeonites of old, they are the hewers of wood and the drawers of water for the camp. On a winter's day, a Dakota mother is often obliged to travel five or eight or ten miles, with the lodge, camp kettle, ax, child and small dogs upon her back. Arriving late in the afternoon at the appointed camping ground, she clears off the snow from the spot upon which she is to erect the teepee. She then, from the nearest marsh or grove, cuts down some poles about ten 288 feet in length. With these she forms a frame work for the tent. Unstrapping her pack, she unfolds the tent cover, which is seven or eight buffalo skins stitched together, and brings the bottom part to the base of the frame. She



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now obtains a long pole, and fastening it to the skin covering, she raises it. The ends are drawn around the frame until they meet, and the edges of the covering are secured by wooden skewers or tent pins. The poles are then spread out on the ground, so as to make as large a circle inside as she desires. Then she or her children, proceed to draw the skins down so as to make them fit tightly. An opening is left where the poles meet at the top, to allow the smoke to escape. The fire is built upon the ground in the centre of the lodge. Buffalo skins are placed around, and from seven to fifteen lodge there through a winter's night, with far more comfort than a child of luxury Upon a bed of down. Water is to be drawn and wood cut for the night. The camp kettle is suspended and preparations made for the evening meal. If her lord and master has not by this time arrived from the day's hunt, she is busied in mending up moccasins. Such is the scene which has been enacted by hundreds of females this very winter in Minnesota. How few of the gentler sex properly appreciate the everlasting obligations they are under to the son of Mary , after the flesh, who was the first that taught the true sphere and the true mission of woman.

The Dakota wife is subject to all of the whims of her husband, and when he is in bad humor, wo unto her. As a consequence, the females of this nation are not possessed of very happy faces, and frequently resort to suicide to put an end to earthly troubles. Uncultivated, and made to do the labor of beasts, when they are desperate, they act more like infuriated brutes than creatures of reason. Some years ago a lodge was pitched at the mouth of the St. Croix. The 289 wife, fearing her husband would demand the whiskey keg when he came from hunting, hid it. Upon his return, she refused to tell him where it was, and he flogged her. In her rage. she went off and hung herself. At Oak Grove, a little girl, the pet of her grandmother, was whipped by her father. The old woman sympathizing with the child, flew into a passion and went off. At last, the screaming of the grandchild was heard, for she had discovered her "grandma" hanging by a portage collar from a burial scaffold, An assistant female teacher in the mission school, being attracted by the noise, went and cut the "old granny" down before life had fled. On another occasion, at the same place, a son-in-law refused to give his mother some whiskey, and in a rage she went on to



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a burial scaffold, tied the portage strap around her neck, and was about to jump off, when Mr. Pond came up to her and cut the strap. Still she did not relinquish her intention of suicide. At last, he climbed on to the scaffold and told her he would stay there as long as she. Other females from the village then came out and succeeded in persuading her to live a little while longer. In this connection, an incident may be told which, for romantic interest, cannot be surpassed. The girl since the occurrence, which we substantially narrate as we find it in the "Pioneer," without being responsible for every particular, has been a pupil in the Rev. Mr. Hancock's mission school at Remnica or Red Wing village.

In the spring of 1850, a young girl, fourteen years of age, shot another girl with whom she was quarreling. The deceased was the daughter of a sullen man by the name of Black Whistle. The affrighted girl, after she fired the gun, fled to the traders house, and was by him aided to make her escape down to Wabashaw's village. While stopping at Red Wing's village, some hundred miles from the place where the deed was committed, the incensed father overtook her. His first plan was to carry her home and sacrifice her at his daughter's burial scaffold, but through the influence of some of the whites he changed his plan, and resolved to make her his slave or his wife. For some time she endured what to her was a living death, but on one night she suddenly disappeared. Not many days after, there appeared at Good Road's village, a young Indian boy, stating that he was a Sisseton and had just arrived from the plains. He was well received, no one dreaming that he was the Indian maid. While in this disguise, she went out one day to spear fish, when her husband and enemy, the revengeful father of the girl she had shot, met her, and inquired for her, and avowed his intention to kill her. She very coolly assented to the justice of what he said and left. At last, her real sex being suspected, she came down to Little Crow or Kaposia village. Here she passed herself off as a Winnebago orphan; which disguise succeeded for a time. But soon she was suspected, and again took up her flight, and at last took up her residence at Red Wing's village, though for a long time no one knew what had become of her.

## THE CHIEFS.

An Indian chief is a man of comparatively little importance among his tribe; nor does he in dress and mode of living differ from others. Previous to their intercourse with Europeans, the man who was bravest in war was chief. Now the chiefs are civil chiefs, and the descendants of those that have been created such by the whites. A chief cannot act except the tribe are willing, and he is as particular as an aspiring demagogue not to express an opinion differing from that of the majority. The first civil chief is said to have been Wabashaw . The following is said to have been the history of his obtaining the title. After the cession of Canada to the British by the French, there was an English trading post in the vicinity of St. Paul. The trader, whom the Indians called Pagonta , (Mallard Duck,) was shot by an Indian who disliked him. In consequence of this, they had no trader the following winter, and in the spring a council was held, and it was resolved that the braves of the band should take and deliver up to the authorities of Quebec the murderer. About one hundred men and women embarked on the embassy. By the time they had paddled to Green Bay, many grew faint-hearted and deserted, and before they left there only half a dozen, including women, were left. Wabashaw , the grandfather: of the present chief, a true Spartan spirit,, was the man who infused courage into the little remnant. After danger by land and by water, he reached Quebec, assumed the guilt of the murderer, and delivered himself as an atonement for his suffering tribe.

The English were favorably impressed by his bearing, and learning that the Dakotas lived in seven bands, they hung a medal around his neck, and gave him six more to be delivered to one of the bravest men of the other bands. Wabashaw returned the "Father of his Country," but a victim of envy. He died an exile from his band on the Hoka or Root River.

The Dakotas suffered much for want of law. The individual who desires to improve his condition is not only laughed at but maltreated. Moreover, if he acquires any property, there is no law which secures it to him, and it is liable to be taken away at any time by

any ill-disposed person. Until this state of things is altered by the interposition of the United States government, or the interposition of Providence in some unforeseen way, there is little hope of elevating this tribe. Their missionary will be forced to look upon this degradation, and say in view thereof, "my whole head is sick, my whole heart faint."

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### **PECULIARITIES.**

The Superstitions and peculiarities of the-Dakotas are so, various that we can but barely glance at them. They count years by winters; and compute distances by the number of nights passed upon a journey; their months are computed by moons, and are as follows:

1. Wi-teri, *January*; the hard moon.
2. Wicata-wi, *February*; the raccoon moon.
3. Istawiczayan-wi, *March*; the sore-eye moon.
4. Magaorada-wi, *April*; the moon in which the geese lay eggs; also called Wokada-wi; and sometimes Watopapi-wi, the moon when the streams are again navigable.
5. Wojuri-wi, *May*; the planting moon.
6. Wajustecasa-wi, *June*; the moon when the strawberries are red.
7. Canpasapa-wi, and Wasunpa-wi, *July*; the moon when the choke cherries are ripe, and when the geese shed their feathers.
8. Wasuton-wi, *August*; the harvest moon.
9. Psihnaketu-wi, *September*; the moon when rice is laid up to dry.
10. Wi-wajupi, *October*; the drying rice moon; sometimes written Wazupi-wi.

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11. Takiyura-wi, *November*, the deer rutting moon.

12. Tahecapsun-wi, *December*, the moon when the deer shed their horns.

They believe that the moon is made of something as good as green-cheese. The popular notion is that when the moon is full, a great number of very small mice commence nibbling until they have eaten it up. A new moon then begins to grow until it is full, then it is devoured.

Though almost every Dakota young man has his pocket mirror, a maid does not look at a looking-glass, for it is "wakan" or sacred. Almost everything that the man owns is wakan or sacred, but nothing that the woman possesses is so esteemed. If one has a toothache, it is supposed to be caused by a wood-pecker concealed within, or the gnawing of a worm. Coughs are occasioned by the sacred men operating through the medium of the down of the goose, or the hair of the buffalo. It is considered a sin to cut a stick that has once been placed on the fire, or to prick a piece of meat with an awl or needle. It is wrong for a woman to smoke through a black pipe-stem, and for a man to wear a woman's mocacins. 'It is also sinful to throw gunpowder on the fire.

### IDEA OF THE FUTURE.

This tribe of Indians believe that an individual has several souls. Le Sueur , 150 years ago, wrote that they said they had three souls, but the sacred men say that a Dakota has four souls. At death one of these remains with or near the body; one in a bundle containing some of the clothes and hair of the deceased, which the relatives preserve until they have an opportunity to throw them into the enemy's country; one goes into the spirit land; and one passes into the body of a child or some animal.

They have a fear of the future, but no fixed belief in relation to the nature of the future punishment. The Dakotas are generally taciturn on such topics. The more simple minded

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believe that a happy land exists across a lake of boiling water, and that an old woman sits on the shore holding a long narrow pole, that stretches across the water to the earth. Warriors who can show marks of wounds on their flesh, can walk the pole with security; also infants, whose blue veins are a passport as good as war marks. Others slip into the boiling water.

Their theology makes no difference between the condition of the thief and liar and the correct and good man. Those who commit suicide are thought to be unhappy. They believe that a woman who commits suicide will have to drag through another world that from which she hung herself in this, and that s, he will often break down the corn in another land by the pole or 294 tree which dangles at her feet, and for this will be severely beaten by the inhabitants of the spirit land.

When any one dies, the nearest friend is very anxious to go and kill an enemy. A father lost a child while the treaty of 1851 was pending at Mendota, and he longed to go and kill an Ojibway. As soon as an individual dies the corpse is wrapped in its best clothes. Some one acquainted with the deceased then harangues the spirit on the virtues of the departed; and the friends, who sit around with their faces smeared with a black pigment, the signs of mourning. Their lamentations are very loud, and they cut their thighs and legs with their finger nails or pieces of stone to give free vent, as it would appear, to their grief. The corpse is not buried, but placed in a box upon a scaffold some eight or ten feet from the ground. Hung around the scaffold are such things as would please the spirit if it were still in the flesh, such as the scalp of an enemy or pots of food. After the corpse has been exposed for some months, and the bones only remain, they are buried in a heap, and protected from the wolves by stakes.

St. Paul , 1853.